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EDITORIAL

The opinion is gaining some currency in geological circles that the official geological surveys, national and state, are likely to become, at no distant day, little more than economic bureaus administered for their immediate serviceability to industrial enterprises. It is even apprehended that they may drift so far in this direction that they will fall short of being, in the highest, broadest, and truest sense, economic, since this involves the development of the deeper scientific values which are the foundation of the sounder economics.

Running as the mate to this forecast is the complementary prophecy that the evolution of geological science and of its educational economics will be relegated essentially to the universities.

It must be acknowledged that there is some ground in current drift for these twin forecasts. If it were possible to find an absolutely impartial and thoroughly competent jury to pass upon the work of the past decade, its verdict would possibly be that the larger and more far-reaching contributions to the science of geology have come from the universities, and that their relative productiveness in this field has been markedly increasing. It might even be decided that the most valuable contributions to the working methods of the science, especially those of the more searching and refined class, have also come from the universities. At the same time it would doubtless be decided that the economic efficiency of the governmental surveys has been notably increased and the adaptability of their results to immediate commercial demands has been markedly enhanced. Very likely a perfectly impartial judge, surveying critically the appropriate function of the official surveys, on the one hand, and of the universities, on the other, would give his approval to some notable divergence of effort along the lines that have thus been realized in recent practice, if it were controlled by appropriate limitations. At the same time he would doubtless recognize that no small restraint upon excessive tendencies in either direction is quite essential to the permanent success of the surveys, if not also of the

universities. If the surveys become narrowly economic and concern themselves chiefly with conventional descriptions and mappings, interpreted along inherited lines, without the inspiration and regenerative influence of profound investigation, it is not difficult to foresee that in a very short period their products would fall so far below those of the progressive geologists who are engaged in advancing the science that discredit would be brought upon the surveys and their overthrow or reorganization invited. The ultimate good standing of official work is intimately dependent upon a constant revision of basal ideas and a persistent improvement of methods founded upon an ever-increasing command of the fundamental principles that underlie the science, and stimulated by a perpetual search for more complete knowledge. This is as true of the economic phases of the science as of any other. Besides this, it is impossible to foresee accurately what may and what may not come to have economic value. It may be predicted with much confidence that not a few new aspects of the science whose economic relations are as yet wholly unrecognized will prove to be among the most valuable contributions to the broader and deeper economics of the future.

If the universities were supplied with the requisite means, they might be disposed to accept complacently the foreshadowed alternative assigned them. To come into an essential monopoly of the immeasurable riches that lie scarcely concealed beneath the surface of existing geological science might well be regarded by them, from the narrow point of view, as a boon to be welcomed with ardor. To be thus left free to rework the relatively raw results of surveys made for immediate industrial ends, and to bring forth from them by supplementary inquiry their true scientific riches, might, speaking again narrowly, be a source of great seeming advantage to the universities. The universities, however, are not now supplied with adequate means for cultivating this great field. They are gaining these rapidly, and might doubtless attain them at an early day, if so inviting a field is to be thus measurably vacated for them.

But, from the higher point of view, it seems clear that any sharp differentiation of the kind foreshadowed, if it were permitted to go beyond the most moderate and restrained limits, would be injurious to the sum-total of results, and to the larger interests of both univer-

sities and surveys. That it would be little less than fatal to the official surveys, in the long run, is scarcely to be questioned, as they and their results would fall into disrepute unless constantly fed by new science, new methods, and new men broadly and thoroughly equipped. That it would be unwholesome for the universities to be dissevered from industrial work for the common good and to be out of sympathy with official surveys is scarcely less obvious. The higher interests of the surveys and the universities alike will be conserved by a harmonious co-operation in which both shall strive to reach at once scientific and economic results. Differences in the relative stresses and proportions of immediate effort, in the one direction or the other, are obviously appropriate and laudable; but no university can wisely neglect the useful side of the science it cultivates, nor can any official organization, without jeopardy, ignore the profounder scientific aspects of the field it cultivates.

But, above all, intellectual economics should not escape recognition. The intellectual wealth of the nation is its greatest wealth. The contribution which intellectuality has made to the present material prosperity, even if we weigh nothing higher, is perhaps its greatest contribution. Large as are our native resources, they would yield a relatively small return to our people, were it not for that acute mental activity, that signal intellectual power, and that abounding sagacity which so distinctly characterize the present industrial evolution. This intellectuality lies not so much in the mere possession of technical knowledge as of insight, constructive genius, and aggressive mental energy; and these are fostered more effectually perhaps by the influence of independent original research, by the modes of thought and the spirit of investigation, than by any other single agency.

By as much as these intellectual possessions are our greatest assets, by so much would a failure to promote them in the most effective manner be the greatest of economic shortcomings, whether on the part of an official organization or of a university.

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